

From: Roberta S. Echelson, 143 Haynes Road, West Hartford, CT 06117

Hearing Date: March 11, 2016

Subject: Bill named "An Act Concerning Residential Water Rates, Public Drinking Water Supply Emergencies and the Sellers of Bottled Water". Written testimony Supporting Substitute SB 422

Submittal Date: March 9, 2016

To the members of the Planning and Development Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views on this important issue that affects every community served by the MDC. I have lived in Greater Hartford most of my life (currently in West Hartford) and am a long time customer of the MDC, which provides my water as well as public access to vital natural sites such as the Reservoir that is less than a mile from my office in Farmington. Being fortunate enough to both live and work near these valued resources, the impact our water has for all of us MDC consumers is something I fully value. That's why the MDC's recent actions that have the potential to endanger our water supply are so greatly concerning.

The MDC is a utility, providing services that are absolutely critical to those they serve. There's no replacement for the clean water and appropriate stewardship of this water. Yet MDC's recent actions put that stewardship at risk under present law and regulation. It is absolutely critical that CT ensure protection for CT's people; in the case of a DPH declared Drought advisory, any export of our water must cease. Substitute SB 422 speaks to this need.

Also, water rate discounts for water bottlers need to be rescinded. MDC consumers have for years paid not just for the use of water but for the services and facilities needed to ensure the quality of this resource. To provide what we pay increasing rates for to a company that will ship our water out of state for their own profit is inappropriate at best and absurd at the least. In drought conditions, while we will be forced to undertake conservation measures, there will be no such restriction on water bottlers - who will be free to continue selling our resource to others outside our state. Substitute SB 422 provides corrective action that would not penalize our residents.

The Special Sewer Service Charge discount for water bottlers (known as the Clean Water Project Charge) needs to be rescinded. Again, MDC consumers have paid for the infrastructure needed and nobody should be able to walk in and get a discount for what we pay full freight for. Substitute SB 422 also addresses this issue.

Because we can no longer trust that the MDC is acting in the best interests of its CT consumers, it is time to re-establish a citizen MDC oversight committee. In order to reestablish faith that the MDC will work on our behalf as the region's water utility, it is simply vital that we have an on-going role in ensuring that the MDC puts their CT consumers first. We need to ensure that MDC does not in the future set special discount rates in negotiations designed to benefit those who would remove OUR natural resource – CT's water. This is something our legislature can and should address.

I also ask for a moratorium on any new, large capacity agreements until the State Water Plan is completed , addressing the issue of water bottling companies diverting Connecticut's water out of our watersheds. You can do this by passing Substitute SB 422 and recommending it favorably to the CT legislature for action in 2016.

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Roberta S. Echelson written testimony

I feel certain that some will question why a water bottling plant should be singled out and I want to assure you that I have considered this at length. For me it comes down to three main points:

- A large water bottling plant is different from other MDC consumers because we - residents, municipalities, and businesses - use public water services to live our lives and conduct our business. The water bottling company instead will take our CT resource and sell it out of state for a profit, putting our CT resources at risk.
- Single-use plastic bottles are creating environmental havoc on land and at sea. As such, this pollution is endangering CT's people and resources. And the extraction of large quantities creates opportunities for significant harm to CT waterways.
- MDC is our utility and has a responsibility to ensure the quality and long-term availability of our water. Water conservation is one way they have moved these goals forward. Yet they have now chosen to pursue a more secretive path - accommodating the few and cutting MDC's current consumers out of the process. Shameful.

Thank you for your attention. Please protect our region and state resources for the future.